

PortlandTribune

Growing enrollment prompts UP campus expansion plan

School works with neighbors in early stages of planning

BY LAURA FRAZIER

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The University of Portland is working with the city -- and the school's North Portland neighbors -- on a planned 35-acre expansion of its 115-acre campus.

University officials are talking with city planners about the school's land-use master plan that will push the campus farther along the Willamette River adjacent to the University Park neighborhood.

In 2008, the university bought the vacant Triangle Park property that stretches along 2,250 feet of Willamette River waterfront. Though the exact layout for construction is still in the works, the university plans to add a baseball field as well as other buildings to keep up with its rapidly increasing enrollment.



CHRISTOPHER ONSTOTT / TRIBUNE PHOTO
The University of Portland hopes to expand its North Portland campus at least 35 acres by building on the Triangle Park Property purchased in 2008.

The university also is including a second piece of property, called the McCormick and Baxter site, in its master plan boundary. Though the school does not own the 43 acres west of the Triangle Park property, university officials say they are interested in the land.

In 2011, UP received more than 9,300 applications from students, breaking the school's previous application record. The university has enrolled more undergraduate students every year since 2000, and it hit an all-time high with 3,190 students last year.

Officials estimate that about 5,000 students will enroll in 2032.

Working with neighbors

Because the proposal is in the early stages, few plans have been set for the property. However, the school has several ideas for construction, including a physical plant building, additional student housing, recreational fields and science labs.

The university is even considering building a boathouse for its Division I women's rowing team, which formed last year.

University spokesman Jim Kuffner says school officials have worked closely with neighborhood associations to smooth any concerns or head off problems. The master plan has gone through two previous drafts, and neighbors have been able to offer suggestions at open meetings as well as online.

"We feel it's been a very collaborative effort so far," Kuffner says.

Andrew Noethe, land-use chairman for the University Park Neighborhood Association, says the community initially was concerned about the expansion and the school's ability to accommodate the needs of a growing student body.

He says the neighborhood group suggested modifications to a proposed parking plan and wanted to make sure that expansion would not obstruct the Greenway River Trail, a 10.4-mile riverside non-motorized path the city is working on that will eventually connect Kelley Point Park in St. Johns to downtown Portland's Eastbank Esplanade.

Noethe says the university has addressed most of neighbors' concerns.

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Kuffner says the university reworked the parking plan to include more helpful signs and will continue to encourage students to use public transit. The university also donated some of the land needed for the Greenway Trail.

The university has addressed contamination concerns with the Triangle Park property, which has been used as a lumber mill, power plant and ship building facility and might be spoiled with hydrocarbons and metals.

Kuffner says the university has been working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for several years on how to remove the tainted soil, as well as how to regrade the shoreline and make other environmental corrections to the area. A final remediation plan could be ready by the end of the month, he says.

Mark Ader, the EPA's remedial project manager who has worked on the project, says that the university has been "very cooperative."

No construction schedule has been made for the campus expansion, according to Kuffner.

"It's definitely a long-term vision," he says.

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